

No. 4

ADDRESS,

EXPLANATORY OF THE

Principles, Views, & Exertions,

OF THE

British and Foreign Bible Society,

EXTRACTED FROM

THE FIRST REPORT

OF THE

AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY

FOR

STIRLINGSHIRE

AND ITS

VICINITY.

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ADDRESS.

THE British and Foreign Bible Society was established at London in the year 1804, by a number of enlightened and pious individuals, desirous of promoting the best interests of their fellow-creatures. The object of this Institution is to extend the circulation of the Holy Scriptures throughout the British Empire, and amongst foreign nations, unaccompanied with any human interpretation. This simple object, from which the Society cannot depart by the fundamental principle of its association, is thus expressed in the first regulation:—"The designation of this Society shall be The British and Foreign Bible Society, of which the sole object shall be to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without Note or Comment: the only copies in the languages of the United Kingdom to be circulated by the Society shall be the authorised version."

It is difficult to conceive of a Society existing, with an object more pure and laudable, more happily exempted from any reasonable objection, or better calculated for combining, with conscientious consistency, the exertions of Christians of every name. For if the Scriptures be acknowledged to have proceeded from the Almighty, and

to contain the only authentic record of his will with respect to the salvation and the duty of man, it must, doubtless, be of primary importance, that the world universally should possess these Scriptures; nor can it be believed, that any man is acting amiss, but, on the contrary, is discharging a service in itself acceptable to God, and most beneficial for mankind, who exerts himself, according to his opportunities, for the accomplishment of an end so greatly desirable.

The chief objections to the principle itself of the Bible Society, which have yet been heard, with the exception of those which infidelity might be expected to suggest, are the two following:—"In circulating the Scriptures "without note or comment," it has been seriously urged, Christians of different denominations expose to hazard the peculiarities of the particular profession of each; and that in order to protect themselves against this hazard, the articles of their belief should accompany the Scriptures;—as if it really were hazardous to allow the Word of God to shine with unassisted light, as if the universal knowledge of its contents could endanger any thing in religion which it is desirable to retain. Bible Societies, it has likewise been objected, unite Christians of different denominations, whom policy should keep separate. But it constitutes, undoubtedly, no small recommendation of these societies, that without inducing Christians to compromise or abandon whatever they believe the Scriptures contain, they affectionately unite them for their universal dissemination; nor can there be any enlightened, benevolent, or Christian policy, in resisting their union for the execution of such a design.

But it is not from any systematical opposition to the principle itself, that the Bible Society has to apprehend either neglect or hostility, so much as from inattention to

the necessity of its exertions, or misconceptions of the nature of its proceedings. No where, accordingly, throughout the Christian world, has it failed of awakening interest, and securing support, where these have been generally known. Under this impression, the Auxiliary Bible Society for the county of Stirling and its vicinity, request the attention of the public—to the necessity existing for the exertions of the Society, and the wide fields opened and opening for its labours;—to the principles upon which the Society has acted in disseminating the Scriptures;—to the spirit with which its distributions have already been received;—and to the successful exertions it has already made.

From surveys which have been actually taken, it appears, that the deficiency of Bibles, in by far the larger proportion of the British empire itself, is greater than an inhabitant of Scotland, where happily, in the low country at least, such a deficiency is comparatively unknown, could possibly have imagined. In many parts of England, in Wales, but especially in Ireland, the active zeal of the British and Foreign Bible Society has disclosed necessities truly afflicting. Would it have been believed, that in the diocese of Durham, in which there is no reason to think the scarcity of the Scriptures is greater than in other parts of England, where an enquiry was lately instituted by order of the Bishop, for the express purpose of ascertaining the number of persons destitute of the Word of God; “no less than 5,800 families have been found who are destitute of the Scriptures;” and it is added, that, “if this be considered as a fair ground of computation for all the other dioceses, then the number of families in England and Wales in want of Bibles will be more than 350,000, or nearly *two millions* of individuals. Enquiries have

also been made recently, as far as relates to the ships and regiments on home service, in which, out of 31,340 sailors and soldiers who can read, only 5,465 have either Bible or Testament; and the Naval and Military Bible Society has been unable to give one Bible to every tenth person who has applied."

Great as this deficiency is, it is little to what exists in Ireland.

By the intelligence received from Ireland, it appears, that there is no part of the United Kingdom where this want is more felt than in the southern provinces of that island; that not above a third part of the Protestant families there possess Bibles; and that amongst the Papists, who are far more numerous, a Bible is probably not to be found, in more than one, out of 500 families.—*First Report*, p. 15.*

Although the demand for Bibles in Ireland has been great, and the supply considerable, since this lamentable fact was announced to the public (1805); yet from the extent of the deficiency, it cannot, as yet, have been supplied to any very great comparative amount.

In noticing the necessities of our own country, a very interesting class of objects who have enjoyed the bounty of the Society must not be overlooked—the foreign prisoners of war. Of these unfortunate persons, not fewer than from fifty to eighty thousand are to be found in the prisons of this country; and almost all, as they arrive, are destitute of the Scriptures. When their desolate situation, their abundant leisure, the impressions likely to be produced by such a present from the hand of a stranger in a hostile country, with the influence they may individually produce by means of the Bible on their return to their

* The references in this Address are to the Reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society, or to the Appendixes to those Reports.

homes, are considered; the supplying of these persons with the Word of God, must surely appear a very fit object of Christian benevolence.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, it may also be noticed, in the true spirit of Christian charity, have been solicitous to furnish with a supply of Bibles, prisons, hospitals, and alms-houses; that there, amidst their solitude and their misery, the Word of God may meet the eye of the poor, the diseased, and the profligate.

But the chief proportion of the exertions of the Society is demanded for the supply of foreign nations; and if such are the necessities of Britain, it will readily be believed that theirs are greater still. These necessities the Society have brought to light by a series of researches, which remarkably shew how ingenious and indefatigable true benevolence can be; and for which, they are entitled to the thanks and the admiration of the Christian world. Among the nations of Europe, with the exception of Holland, the Scriptures, as appears from their enquiries, are very partially enjoyed, owing to the following causes:—the extreme poverty of many of the inhabitants,—the absolute deficiency in the supply of copies of the Bible,—in some places, to the exorbitant price of a Bible, when it is to be found,—and to habits, consequently ceasing, such as exist with us, of each family making a point of possessing a copy of the Word of God. The following authentic facts, among a multitude to the same purpose, to be found in the printed records of the Society, confirm and illustrate these assertions.

A Correspondent in Nuremberg thus writes:

When I happened to take my usual tour through Austria and Stiria, at Easter last, I had so many urgent calls for Bibles and New Testaments, that I really felt distress, not knowing what to do, or how to supply these urgent demands.—*First Report*, App. No. III.

Another Correspondent at Nuremberg writes :

Alas, how much are Bibles still wanting every where ! Even when a supply has been made here and there, a new deficiency soon arises again. In a neighbouring village, there are many children who manifest a strong attachment to the Word of God ; but the parents are too poor to purchase any Bibles, and the pious clergyman is at a loss how to provide for them. I could write whole pages, were I to mention every particular concerning the deplorable want of Bibles.—*First Report*, App. No. VII.

We have the following account of the necessities of the Grisons, a people inhabiting a mountainous district of Germany :

A company of active Christians in Basle have determined to print an edition of the New Testament for the benefit of the Grison mountaineers, who have a peculiar dialect, with the intention that it should be gratuitously distributed, or sold at a very cheap rate. This work will be peculiarly acceptable to the Grisons ; as the former editions of the New Testament have become so scarce among them, that a copy of it is rarely to be procured, and only at an exorbitant price.—*Fifth Report*, p. 2.

The following extracts refer to populous provinces in the north of Europe :

In reply to your questions respecting the Lithuanian Bible, I beg leave to inform you, that, according to statements received from various quarters, the Lithuanian nation contains upwards of a million of people, the smaller part of whom are under the Prussian, and the larger under the Russian government. Having already mentioned to you the scarcity of the Lithuanian Bible, and the exorbitant sum it costs, (in another passage it is stated to be a sum equal to one pound sterling,) I now add, that there are several worthy men who are greatly desirous to see a new edition printed. There are many pious, but poor people in Lithuania, who would exceedingly rejoice over the gift of a Bible ; and others who are, as yet, in a state of ignorance and sin, might be induced to read it, and under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, be brought to a saving knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ.—*Seventh Report*, App. No. I.

The poverty of the lower classes in Esthonia and Livonia is extreme ; many of the peasants are ignorant even of the existence of the Bible ; at all

events, from its price and scarcity, it is unattainable by them; not one family in a hundred possesses a copy, and there are *four hundred thousand families* in Esthonia and Livonia absolutely without a Bible. It appears also, that, for the last forty years, almost every individual in Esthonia and Livonia has been taught to read; and that there are many respectable and benevolent persons, both among the clergy and laity, who are anxious for the religious improvement of their countrymen, and from whom an active co-operation may be expected.—*Seventh Report*, p. 4.

From the representations of the Hungarian Professors, there are upwards of a million of Protestants in Hungary, and but a small proportion of Bibles among those who speak the Sclavonian and Hungarian dialects; many of whom are so oppressed by poverty, that they find it necessary to appeal to the benevolence of the British and Foreign Bible Society.—*Eighth Report*, p. 7.

Extracts might be multiplied from almost any Report, shewing the equally destitute situation of the other nations of Europe, with the exception formerly mentioned. The selection, however, shall be closed with the affecting account presented of Iceland.

A gentleman well known in England and Scotland, a native of Iceland, has spent a great part of his time in his native country; and as from his learning, and the station he holds under the crown, he has had an opportunity of making himself perfectly acquainted with the state of the country in every respect, his information may be depended on. The number of inhabitants is about 50,000. Although they have no public schoolmaster, there is not one among a hundred above twelve or fourteen years of age who cannot read with ease; and few who cannot write. But although they enjoy these advantages, they are almost entirely without books. As no people in the world are fonder of reading, they endeavour to supply the want of books by the laborious substitute of transcribing them. Bibles and Testaments are no longer to be had for any money; and it is a lamentable fact, that there are not above 40 or 50 entire copies of the Bible in the whole Island. (In another letter from the same person): The common people in Iceland are not behind those of the same description in Denmark, in regard to religious information. This is owing, in the first place, to their great desire for reading, and knowledge in general; secondly, to their excellent religious exercises, which are held in every house from Michaelmas to Easter. Among other devotional books, the

Bible, and particularly the New Testament, is read before the family in every place where this precious book can be had. It is very lamentable, however, that this is not now to be obtained, even for money. When it happens to appear at an auction, it sells at an enormous price. Never will Iceland forget her dear Stistrup, who, at his own expense, bought and sent to this place a great many Bibles and New Testaments to be given away gratis. I remember frequently to have heard the best farmers in the parish warmly contending which of them should have the loan of the Bible which was sent to the parish, for themselves and their children.—*Third Report, App. No. VII.*

In America, as well as in England, deficiencies have been found to exist, which would never have been believed or imagined, had they not been ascertained; and ascertained by enquiries produced by the example, or more direct influence of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The following are only specimens of what the records of the Society present in illustration of this.

The necessity for such an institution (in Philadelphia) has appeared much more evidently to the managers, since, in the course of their duty, they have been led to make particular enquiries into the condition of the poorer class of people in this city, than it ever did before. The deficiency of Bibles has been found to be much greater than was expected; and it is believed to be as great in many other places. The number of families and individuals who are destitute of the Scriptures is so great, that the whole of the funds in the possession of the Society, could be profitably expended in supplying the wants of this city alone, and the opportunities of distributing them in other places are so numerous, that if their funds were tenfold as great as they are, they would still be inadequate to satisfy the demand.—*Sixth Report, App. No. VIII.*

We repeat a communication already often made, and which there is too much reason to fear has not been sufficiently noticed, that although there is not perhaps a spot on earth of equal population with this state, (Connecticut,) better supplied with the Holy Scriptures, yet many are destitute of this blessed volume: probably more are without the Scriptures through poverty, than could at present be conveniently supplied with our funds. To those who have not actually investigated this subject, this may look like a conjecture, and may seem very improbable.—*Ninth Report, App. No. XXVI.*

Documents might be multiplied, illustrating the vast field for the operations of the Society which our Eastern empire providentially presents, comprehending a population of **SIXTY MILLIONS**; in which, according to the first Report of the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society, which has recently reached this country, nearly **A MILLION** of Christians are to be found, who would gladly receive the word of life, but are almost entirely destitute of it.

In this short survey, we omit entirely, with the exception of India, Mahommedan and Pagan nations—all in darkness—which, alas! have hitherto formed by far the larger proportion of the world. Is it possible for the Christian to contemplate this necessitous condition of his fellow-creatures, without instantly feeling the duty and importance of hastening to relieve it, and sanctioning, with his whole heart, any reasonable plan for accomplishing this relief?

Let us, then, advert to the means which, with this view, the British and Foreign Bible Society has adopted; and, appealing to the same documents, we shall find that they are precisely such as the nature of the case, well understood, would suggest and prescribe.

An idea has some how gone abroad, that those in Christian countries, who are in want of the Scriptures, are such as are unable to read; and that, consequently, the distributions of the Society, however well intended, must, in a great degree, be lavished in vain. In vain, undoubtedly, they would in this case be. But if any can imagine that the British and Foreign Bible Society could be guilty of such folly, as to squander its funds in presenting Bibles to those who are unable to peruse them, they may be undeceived by the following facts, in addition to what is involved in some of the preceding extracts.

Among a series of enquiries proposed to an intelligent

correspondent, in the contemplation of furnishing the tribe of the Calmucks with the Scriptures, this was the sixth, “*Can the Calmucks read*; and is there any ground to expect, that they could and would make a good use of the Bible?” *Fourth Report*, App. p. 32.

In a very early stage of their labours, the Society intended to publish an edition of the Scriptures in the native Irish, but they previously inquired to what extent such a version would be useful, from the capacities of reading among those who speak this language; and from the uncertainty in which they were left, notwithstanding all the information they collected, they delayed this version for years; nor did they proceed to publish it, until they received the most satisfactory assurances that it would be used. Were it necessary to say any thing farther for removing a misconception so very absurd, illustrations of the same caution on the part of the Society might be selected from almost any Report.

The principles upon which the Society has acted, are equally simple and reasonable. The great object evidently is, to provide every where a supply of Bibles, corresponding as far as possible with the local necessities. By sacrificing profits on their sales, and adopting the most economical method of printing, they endeavour to furnish the Scriptures at the cheapest possible rate. For encouraging subscriptions, and enlarging the opportunities for the charity of individuals, they allow each subscriber to purchase, in a certain proportion to his subscription, at a considerable reduction of price. By confidential agents in various parts of the British empire, and of the world, they encourage the purchase of the Scriptures at the Society's prices—they furnish them at a reduced price to such as cannot afford the whole—and they give them gratuitously to the poor. In the two last cases, it will be found

that the Society is particularly cautious; that, from the necessity of economy, as well as other obvious considerations, they never, but in very urgent cases, or from other circumstances very peculiar, distribute gratuitously; and they instruct their agents, as well as Auxiliary Societies, to accept of any sum, rather than, when any thing can be afforded, give a Bible for nothing. They have likewise invariably exerted themselves to institute societies in various parts of the world, and especially in the most necessitous quarters; encouraging their formation, and aiding their exertions, by donations of the Scriptures, or by pecuniary supplies.

The Regulations of the Society, to be found in the Appendix, sufficiently explain their encouragements to subscribers, and the prices at which they afford the Scriptures. The following are illustrations of the other principles of distribution referred to.

Your Committee avail themselves of the present opportunity to state their opinion, that the plan of *selling* the Scriptures to the poor, where practicable, has been found to possess several important advantages over gratuitous distribution. They have, accordingly, suggested it in a resolution, which they have adopted, viz. "That the several Auxiliary Bible Societies be requested to promote the sale of Bibles and Testaments among the army and navy, and also to supply prisoners of war, jails, hospitals, alms-houses, &c. at their discretion, respect being had in all cases to the preference given by the Parent Society to sale, at however low a price, over gratuitous distribution."

A respectable correspondent thus addresses the Society, who, upon their usual principles, complied with his request, voting 200*l.* for the purposes which he mentions.

Permit me to come forward again with a petition in behalf of our good friends the Swedes. In Finland, are many thousand Swedes without the Bible. The Society in Abo need to employ all their funds for the Finnish Bible, of which I hope soon to send you a specimen. The consequence is, that, at least for many years, nothing can be done for the Swedes in Finland from this quarter. Now I would propose, that your Committee should

appropriate a sum of money, for the purpose of procuring a stock of Bibles for their use. I should propose that you give the society in Abo 100*l.* on condition that they employed it in purchasing Bibles and Testaments from the Society in Stockholm, selling them out again at prime cost, so that the whole of the sum be returned again into the funds of the Society, to procure a fresh supply with, till every one who was willing and able to pay for a Bible had obtained one. A second sum ought to be appropriated, for procuring a supply of Bibles and Testaments to be given gratis, or at reduced prices, to the poor, and this sum could be renewed from time to time, till all were furnished with the Scriptures.—*Ninth Report*, App. No. XXXIII.

As an example of the influence of the Society in forming Bible Societies in other parts of the world, the Hungarian Institution may be selected. In the Eighth Report, we are told “they promised a donation of 500*l.* to aid the printing and continued circulation of the Hungarian and Sclavonian Scriptures, *if a Society shall be established in Hungary for that purpose.*” By the Ninth Report, we have the following interesting account of the result of this offer, in connection with the previous enquiries and suggestions of the Society. “The promise of 500*l.* in the event of the formation of a Bible Society in Hungary, to aid the printing and continued circulation of the Hungarian Scriptures, enabled the friends of the undertaking in that country to forward it, with an activity which has been crowned with success. The Hungarian Bible Institution has been formed at Presburg, under the patronage of the Baroness de Lay, a Protestant lady of high distinction and character. Great exertions have been made to give it publicity, and to procure subscriptions: it is expected that it will obtain the support both of Catholics and Protestants. The Hungarian Bible Institution commenced its operations, by purchasing Sclavonic Bibles for sale to the poor, at a very cheap rate.”

When we coolly consider these methods, which the British and Foreign Bible Society has adopted for the dissemination of the Scriptures, we may surely ask if mankind

are to be supplied with the word of God, what other means more simple, efficient, and unobjectionable, are to be employed for this purpose?

That the bounty of the Society may have been abused, notwithstanding all this caution, is no doubt possible; although it deserves to be remarked, that such cases, to any extent worthy of notice, are yet to be made out, and that certain assertions of the existence of these cases, very loudly and industriously propagated, have proved, upon enquiry, to be altogether frivolous. But what species of charity has not been abused by the unworthy? To oppose the British and Foreign Bible Society, on the ground of the misconduct of individuals supplied by its beneficence, would not be more rational, than, on account of the profligacy of some who may have received our private alms, to resolve to give alms no more, or to deny generally the propriety of alms-giving;—it would not be more rational, than to oppose charitable institutions, framed by benevolence and wisdom, because some have been sufficiently unprincipled to turn their bounty into licentiousness. Those, undoubtedly, involve themselves in no small degree of criminality, who, instead of patiently investigating the published records of the Institution, listen to rumours, which they cannot authenticate; and, on the ground of these rumours, not only keep aloof from the Society themselves, but discourage those who would otherwise lend it their assistance.

But let us now examine how far from fact there is reason to believe, that the efforts of the Society have not been in vain; let us examine whether the multitudes, for whose welfare it labours, are alive to their own necessities, and disposed to improve its beneficence. It is here especially, that the friends of the Institution are furnished with the most delightful encouragements to persevering exertion,

and with cause of gratitude to that Being, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, and who is able to dispose them as he pleases. By the gracious favour of his Providence, a desire for the Scriptures has exceeded all the means of gratifying it. Wherever the existence of the Society has been known, and its exertions employed, multitudes have embraced its bounty with the most affecting eagerness. Large editions have been purchased, almost as soon as they were announced; the gratuitous distributions have been received with the most moving expressions of gratitude; and extensive as are the means of the Society, they have hitherto been unable any where to answer the demand. But especially, there is the most abundant evidence, from the records of the Society, that, in as far as opportunities of observation have been furnished, the Scriptures have not been neglected by those who have received them,—they have been read with care, and, it is to be hoped, with profit, not only in cases where, from the previous character of those who have received them, this might have been anticipated, but in cases where this result must have been less confidently looked for. Yes, the bounty of the Society has been received with the best emotions. While thousands in this empire have gladly accepted, and are now improving it, the poor in distant countries, rejoicing in the gift, have wondered at that benevolence which induced British Christians to think of them; and prisoners taken in war, sharing its beneficence, have blessed the hour which made them captives to Britain, and have lost their enmity to the land of their captivity.

Illustrations of these facts might be collected in abundance from the Appendix of any Report,—from none more copiously than the last. The following are among the shortest, though by no means the most affecting specimens. The first is an extract of a letter from a privy councillor

in Iceland, expressing the feelings of the inhabitants of that island, on occasion of their receiving the much needed supply of the Scriptures from the British and Foreign Bible Society.

According to our last interview, I take the liberty of sending you inclosed, extracts from letters written to me by friends in Iceland, relating to the want of the New Testament in that country, and the gratitude of my countrymen towards those who supplied them with the book which they adore. As to the certificates referred to by Mr. Thorlacius, they prove all and every one, that there has been in Iceland for some years past the most deplorable want of books, useful to convey spiritual knowledge among the people. The rectors, therefore, testify the warmest gratitude to their generous benefactors. They pray, "that the Almighty God, who is all charity, may reward those great promoters of piety and virtue, with his choicest blessings, temporal and eternal." And so, my dear Sir, I beg you will bear from my countrymen and myself, a testimony which may convince the illustrious Society (of which you are a worthy member,) of our unfeigned gratitude, and our zeal in promoting your pious designs. (Enclosures follow.)—*Ninth Report*, App. No. XXIII. 9.

The Finnish Bible Society thus express themselves, in an address to the British and Foreign.

For this so great, so pious a service done to Christianity, and particularly to Finland, accept our bounden and heartfelt thanks, and be assured, that the memory of it will remain with us for ever.—*Ninth Report*, App. No. XXX.

The next extracts relate to prisoners of war.

It is impossible to give an adequate description of the anxiety that was manifested by the poor Spaniards to get possession of a New Testament; many sought them with tears and earnest entreaties; and although I had nearly enough for them all, yet it was with difficulty they were pacified, until they received from my hand the word of eternal life. Since which, I have witnessed the most pleasing sight that ever my eyes beheld—nearly a thousand poor Spanish prisoners sitting around the prison walls—doing what? reading the word of God with an apparent eagerness, that would have put many professing Christians to the blush.—*Third Report*, App. No. X.

For many months last past, numbers of the prisoners have manifested a great desire to read the Scriptures. As soon as I found this to be the case, in order to supply them as far as possible, and at the same time to prevent the books being too cheap, I procured one or two respectable officers on board of each ship, who love the Bible, and committed to their care a few Bibles and Testaments, to lend out every day in the manner of circulating libraries. This plan has hitherto answered well; for we often see small parties collected together in different parts of the ship, and one engaged in reading to the rest. But in proportion as the Bible is *known*, the desire to read it becomes more general; hence, in addition to the circulating libraries, when I find a person who has a strong desire to possess a Bible or Testament of his own, to take home with him to his native country, I give him one. A few days ago, I visited the general hospital-ship, and was much pleased to see some of the poor *dying* captives reading the Bible as they lay in their beds. I have letters in my possession, both in French and German, expressive of the high sense of gratitude which many of those feel, to whom the bounty of the Society has extended.—*Eighth Report*, App. No. LXXI.

It will be remembered, that, in some of my former letters, I mentioned that circulating libraries had been established for the benefit of those who were desirous of reading the word. Those libraries were attended with considerable advantage, as they gave an opportunity to a great number of persons to read the same book. In the course of the last six months, we have been enabled to improve upon the plan of libraries by the institution of schools, for the purpose of teaching the ignorant to read the sacred Scriptures. The schools are ten in number, containing thirty scholars each. To each school we allow fifteen Testaments, that is, one between every two scholars, and one Bible for the use of the master. By this means, the preservation of the books is secured, and they are read by 300 scholars several hours every day. It is pleasing to see many (even old men with spectacles) who, six months ago, could not read at all, now able to read the Word of God with a good degree of ease.—*Ninth Report*, App. No. XXXVI.

The following, from the negroes in the West India islands, are very interesting:

(From Antigua.) We have the pleasure to receive a large quantity of Bibles and Testaments, for distribution among those negroes who can read. We cordially thank the venerable Society for this proof of their love to the negroes. They spend, even now, many an hour in the night, to exercise themselves in reading the most blessed of all books.

(From St. Kitt's.) With great joy we received, among the stores sent us,

a chest containing Bibles and Testaments. We beg to render to the generous donors our best thanks. We distributed them liberally among all those of our negro converts who can use them; and were desired by them all to send their thanks, in the best manner, to the worthy British and Foreign Bible Society. They added, that they did not in the least deserve such humane attention from such good men in England, living at so great a distance from them; but that they would not cease to pray the Lord to bless them, and be their eternal reward.—*Seventh Report*, App. No. XLI.

There are other expressions of the same sentiments, from various parts of the West Indies. It is impossible to describe the joy produced among converts from heathen nations by the gift of the Scriptures, and the diligence with which they peruse them.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has already had the gratification of presenting to the Esquimaux, on the coast of Labrador, the gospel of St. John, in their native language; and your Committee have since received a translation of the three remaining gospels, which they have directed to be printed. The value set upon the present already made, may be estimated by the following passage in a letter from Labrador: "The Christian Esquimaux in all the three settlements, know no greater pleasure than to assemble in the evening, when they return from sea, or their hunting grounds, in some hut or house, to hear the word of God read by one of the party, adult, or child, who has been instructed in the schools established in each place.—*Ninth Report*, p. 36.

In another passage, these people thus warmly express themselves:

Jesus is worthy of thanks, and our friends are worthy of thanks, who love us so much though they have never seen us, and have printed for us the comfortable words of God, that we might read them in our own language to our joy and edification.—*Seventh Report*, App. No. XXVIII. Many affecting scenes took place, when the gospel of St. John was distributed among our Esquimaux, and their English benefactors were mentioned to them. Tears of gratitude ran down many a cheek; and they expressed their wonder and astonishment that there were friends in England, who, though entirely unknown to them, yet wished to promote their eternal peace and happiness, by sending them the precious gift of the Word of God. Some pressed the little book to their bosom, and seemed as happy as if they enjoyed a foretaste of heaven.—*Eighth Report*, App. No. XXXI.

These, it may once more be remarked, are but inconsiderable examples of what the Reports of the Society exhibit, and which justify, on the part of the Society, such general language as this; "Its benevolence has been accepted with the same cordiality with which it has been granted." And what heart, influenced by religion, will not feel, that even these are more than a reward for all the labours of the Society, and furnish the most satisfactory encouragements to persevering exertion?

It now remains to notice the extent of the influence and exertions of the Society. These have already reached a magnitude, which, whilst it astonishes, must proportionally gratify its friends. It may truly be said, that never did any association accomplish so much in so short a space. There is not a civilised country on earth, which the benevolence of the Society has not already visited. They are investigating the necessities, and hastening to supply the wants, of the world. From Labrador to New South Wales, from the eastern Archipelago to the western extremities of America, they are diffusing the light of life. The following list of their distributions within the united kingdom, for the last year only, extracted from the last Report, will exemplify the extent and variety of their exertions in this single department.

To French, American, and other prisoners of war in Great Britain, and returning in cartels.

To foreign troops at various stations.

To the poor of several parishes in the Presbytery of Glasgow, in consideration of the collections made for the Society.

To the poor in Ireland, to be sold at very reduced prices, 550 Bibles, 4000 Testaments.

To the poor Roman Catholics in Cumberland.

To the Hibernian Society, 250 Bibles, 1000 Testaments.

To the Society in Edinburgh, for promoting Gaelic Schools in the Highlands, 500 Gaelic Bibles, 500 Testaments.

To Derry Bible Society, 500 Bibles, 2500 Testaments.

To New Ross Bible Society, 250 Bibles, 1000 Testaments.

To individuals in Ireland.

To poor Danes.

To several regiments of Irish Militia.

To various individuals for charitable Institutions, and for Prisons, Hospitals, Work-houses, and Guard-houses.

Their activity abroad has been proportional; and they inform us, that “the number of Bibles and Testaments issued by the Society, from the 21st of February to the 31st of December 1812 inclusive, is as follows: Bibles 81,319, Testaments 121,261, making the total quantity, from the commencement of the Institution to that period, 221,734 Bibles, 412,785 Testaments.”

They also announce the following very pleasant fact, that “the Roman Catholic Bible Society at Ratisbon, formed in 1806, has distributed 27,000 copies of the New Testament in German, and continues its useful labours, unaided by the British and Foreign Bible Society. It appears that, from the Ratisbon Society and other sources, not fewer than 60,000 copies of the Holy Scriptures have been circulated among the Roman Catholics in Germany in the course of a few years.”

The influence of the Society may likewise be estimated from the number of Auxiliary Societies, by which, in the British empire, it is now supported. Their number amounts to nearly *two hundred*, exclusive of the Branch Societies connected with many of them; and, as appears from their published documents, they seem universally animated with the spirit of the Parent Institution, in their activity, benevolence, and zeal.

The Hibernian Bible Society, aware of the importance of its station, seems eminently distinguished by its ardour in the common cause. In the course of the last year, “it has augmented,” as we are informed by the last Report of

the British and Foreign Bible Society, "the Branch Societies in connection with it from eight to thirty-five, all of them extensive and vigorous, and animated with the most lively zeal in the great cause for which they are associated. The increased liberality of the Subscribers to this Institution, and the spirit of its new associates, have extended the circulation of the Holy Scriptures in a proportionate degree. Since its last Anniversary, the number of Bibles and Testaments, distributed by the Hibernian Society and its Branches, amounts nearly to 40,000, exceeding by 28,000 the distribution of any preceding year."

On the continent of Europe, the German, Berlin, and Stockholm Societies, nourished by the Institution in London, have long been acting with extensive effect; and the Esthonian, Abo, Hungarian, and Petersburg Institutions, are now added to their number. In the East, the Calcutta Bible Society is extending its distributions, and diffusing its spirit throughout the millions of India; and has recently acquired two interesting associates in the Ceylon Bible Society, of which the Governor is President, all the Members of his Majesty's Council in the island Vice-Presidents, and most of the principal servants of the Crown subscribers to its funds; and the Bible Society for the islands of Mauritius, Bourbon, and dependencies, whose formation is just announced in a Postscript to the last Report. In the American States, it must be added, Societies, having the same object and the same spirit, are every where formed, or forming. It is impossible for a Briton to contemplate the relation of the London Institution to these Societies in all quarters of the world, without the liveliest interest: it is the trunk on which all these luxuriant branches grow; it is the soul which gives life and action to all the members of this vast body.

Of the Societies referred to on the continent of Europe,

the one last mentioned is worthy of particular attention, from its situation and probable influence. It seems to be "the day spring from on high," visiting at length a populous region long in great darkness. The British and Foreign Bible Society had long turned their attention and their hopes towards Russia, a country where so much is necessary, and so little done. They had been making inquiries, and endeavouring to excite interest, among persons of influence as early as 1804. But it was not till the commencement of this year, that, by the diligence and perseverance of their agent at Petersburg, their benevolent wishes were crowned with success, in circumstances peculiarly auspicious. The following is extracted from the last Report:

Your Committee will conclude their Report of the transactions of the North of Europe, with the interesting information of the establishment of a Bible Society at St. Petersburg, not only with the sanction, but with the formal authority of his Majesty the Emperor of Russia. It deserves to be recorded, that the Plan and Memorial for a Bible Society, obtained the deliberate consideration, at the close of last year, of his Imperial Majesty and his Ministers, at a time when their attention was necessarily and closely occupied with military and political arrangements of the greatest importance to the interests of the empire.

The Plan was honoured by his Majesty's signature; and on the 14th of January, the imperial ukase, for the establishment of a Bible Society, was published. It immediately excited the attention of all ranks and classes of people. On the 23d of January, the establishment of the Society, on the plan and principle of the British and Foreign Bible Society, took place in the house of Prince Galitzin, Minister of Religion for the Empire: the Meeting convened for this purpose was composed of persons of the highest rank, and of all descriptions of Christians, when Prince Galitzin was elected President, and the Vice-Presidents and other officers were nominated.

It was truly delightful to see the unanimity which actuated this Assembly, composed of Christians of the Russian Greek Church, Armenians, Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists: and all met for the express purpose of making the Gospel of the grace of God sound out from the shores of the Baltic to the Eastern Ocean, and from the Frozen Ocean

to the Black Sea and the confines of China, by putting into the hands of Christians and Mahommedans, of Lamites and the votaries of Shaman; with many of the heathen tribes, the Oracles of the living God. Here we had another proof of what the Bible can do, and of the veneration which all Christians have for this blessed book. We see that it is still capable of uniting Christians in the bond of peace.

It will add to the interest excited by this communication, to report, that the Committee of the Petersburg Society have commenced their operations with great spirit and harmony; that they are diligently employed in concerting measures for the formation of Branch Societies in the chief cities of the empire; and that their attention has been drawn by your Committee to the prisoners of war, and also to the poor British subjects in Russia, for whose use a considerable supply of Bibles and Testaments in various languages has been forwarded from the London Depository.—*Ninth Report*, p. 27, 28, 29.

In contemplating this high degree of influence and active operation, which the British and Foreign Bible Society has now attained, it is pleasing to remark the regularity of its progress. Whether we take the contributions—the Auxiliary Societies—or the numbers and consequence of its avowed supporters, as the standard, this character of its rise equally strikes us. The following is a list of its net receipts each year since its institution :

	£.	s.	d.
1805.....	5,502	10	5
1806.....	8,934	18	2 $\frac{3}{4}$
1807.....	7,977	1	11 $\frac{1}{2}$
1808.....	12,999	8	9 $\frac{3}{4}$
1809.....	16,483	1	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
1810.....	27,114	9	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
1811.....	24,683	5	7
1812.....	43,532	12	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
1813.....	76,455	1	0

The progress of the Auxiliary Societies in the British empire, and of Bible Institutions in foreign nations, is equally remarkable. As an interesting example, it may be noticed, that no fewer than *seventy-five* of the former

have been established during the last year. The number and importance of the latter, during the same period, is also unprecedentedly great.

The progress of the Society in obtaining patronage is equally remarkable. As soon as the knowledge of its existence spread among the friends of piety in the united kingdom, their influence, as might have been expected, whatever station in society they occupied, was, to no small extent, cordially secured. And now we perceive the most conspicuous ecclesiastical dignitaries in the English establishment—the first of the landed interest throughout the empire—eminent senators—the most illustrious of the peerage—the highest naval and military characters—and several princes of the blood royal, openly enrolling themselves among its friends. The language of the Duke of Sussex at the last anniversary of the London Society is worthy of being generally known, as it shews, that the attachment of his Royal Highness to the Society is the result of a mature examination of its merits, in which, it is to be hoped his Royal Highness is expressing sentiments common to him with many other illustrious patrons of the Institution. “He had not embarked in this cause,” he said, “without the most serious reflection; and they might now consider his attendance as a brotherly act, and the result of pure and sober reflection.”

Such is the height to which this Institution has already grown; and it is pleasing to add, that nothing appears in its character or circumstances, to justify apprehensions of its decay. On the other hand, the nature of its object, pure and benevolent, excluding almost the possibility of division among its friends—the spiritual necessities of the world, which, perhaps, for ages to come, will demand its undiminished aid—the root which it has already struck in the hearts of the great and the good—the exertions which

these, enlightened by the benevolence of the Society, may naturally be expected to make for their brethren any where in darkness—and the sacred obligations under which it now feels itself to fulfil the expectations which it has excited from the world—these, under the favour of Providence, are the guarantees of its prosperity and increase.

The preceding is a very imperfect sketch of this singular Institution. It is the character of every scheme of benevolence, that, beside securing its direct design, many secondary advantages, not perhaps contemplated by its original projectors, never cease to result from it. True benevolence in the heart is a sacred flame; and although, by some impulse, its greatest strength may be thrown towards one object, it still tends to diffuse itself in all directions. These secondary advantages which the British and Foreign Bible Society has produced already, or will, in all probability, eventually produce, are so obvious, that they have been often enumerated. Its most obvious effect will be, as it has been, to open a channel of affectionate intercourse, to establish a bond of fraternal union, among Christians of every denomination, and in all quarters of the world. By the disclosures of the moral condition of mankind, which it will present to every Christian, it will furnish him with information which will improve his heart, and stimulate him to compassion, beneficence, and prayer. By the importance which it represents the Christian world as every where attaching to the Scriptures—by the gratitude with which mankind are every where observed to receive this present—by the effects which the diffusion of the Scriptures will be seen to produce, it will raise still higher our estimation of the word of God, and may stimulate many to ponder with care, who have hitherto possessed, without duly appreciating, this best gift of God to man. Assuredly it will give origin, or impart fresh

spirit, as it has already done, to plans for the promotion of general education. And it cannot fail to extend amongst foreign nations, through the whole mass of their population, the knowledge of the British name, and to exalt and endear the British character.

It is almost superfluous to remark, that both the direct object of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and these secondary ones which have been now referred to, must, in all probability, be more effectually secured, by the formation of an Auxiliary Association in a particular district, than were the friends of the Society in that district to limit their exertions to separate or congregational contributions. While such associations do nothing to diminish the direct influence of the Parent Society, but allow it to be felt in all its strength, they must necessarily augment it. By identifying themselves with the Parent Society, they transfer its influence to the spot where they exist; while they increase the public interest, and enlarge the contributions, by the industrious circulation of intelligence, by frequent meetings, as well as by direct personal applications. And without such associations, it is quite obvious, that these secondary advantages, which should be estimated so highly, would, in a very small degree, be gained, would be diminished nearly in proportion to the distance of any particular district from the centre of influence, the seat of the Society.

In contemplating the nature, the exertions, and the prospects of the British and Foreign Bible Society, it is difficult to exceed in our commendations of it. If there is a tendency to attach undue importance to events occurring in our own times, while interest is warm, and ere their consequences have been developed by time; from causes equally powerful, there is also a tendency to err on the other side. The political events of the last twenty years,

which have done more to transform the face of the world than the transactions of centuries before, have not appeared, except to a reflecting few, in that magnitude, in which they will be contemplated by a future age, when the historian shall have presented them as a whole, exhibiting, at one view, their nature, their causes, and their results.

This remark is unquestionably applicable to the operations of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and to the estimate which the present age is apt to form of their importance. Simple as this Institution is in its principles; unimposing in its proceedings, necessarily presenting its successes in separate details, and cautiously abstaining from any confident anticipation of results, which, although justified by the most reasonable probabilities, have not yet occurred; the present age will probably leave to succeeding generations, that full interest, that warm admiration, which will be produced by the contemplation of this sacred union in the Christian world, rapidly attracting the good in every land, for the prosecution of a scheme equally simple, novel, and, as it should seem, practicable, for removing darkness from the earth.

Among the many interesting circumstances connected with this Institution, there are few more striking, or more auspicious, than the singular era at which it has appeared. At a time when, by the outward aspect of events, as well as by the most sober explication of prophetic dates, the reign of Antichrist is approaching its close,—when the kingdom of the false prophet can scarcely sustain itself, and seems only to await some inconsiderable shock to complete its final overthrow,—when Jewish prejudices are beginning to subside, and the first fruits of rejected Israel have already been collected to God,—when almost every kingdom of the earth has been shaken to its foundation, and the last mighty overturnings are apparently begun,—

at such a juncture, and amidst such events, it is that British Christians have arisen, surrounded with auxiliaries in so many foreign lands, and have solemnly pledged themselves to God and one another, never to lay aside their united efforts, until, by the favour of Heaven, they shall have transmitted the bread and the water of life, to every famishing family of the earth.

Ought not every Christian to be ambitious to unite himself with such a Society, and to aid it with his contributions, with his prayers, with his whole influence? To supply the temporal necessities of his fellow-creatures is a duty which the Christian will ever be forward to fulfil; but he will be ashamed of that worldly compassion, which limits its sympathy and its bounty, to the body and to time,—which has no tears to shed, no prayers to offer, for the darkness, degradation, and wretchedness of the immortal spirit, and makes no exertions to bestow whatever will purify and exalt it on earth, and prepare it for felicity hereafter.

Christians! in your own estimation, will not the world be rich, when in every human abode, there will be a Bible? Hasten, then, to enrich the world. Think, that although in your dwellings, and in your favoured land, the light of life shines without obscurity, there are millions of human habitations which that light does not illumine, there are whole regions of the earth in “darkness which may be felt.”

From the large contributions which the Society has already received, and the great exertions it has already made, let none imagine that the work is done. The Society is only in the outset of its career; its labours are but begun. This appears from the nature of the object which the Society has proposed to itself, and it is impressively stated in the following words of the last Report :—“ But ample as

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